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James E. McGreevey
Governor

State of New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Parks & Forestry, Historic Preservation Office
PO Box 404, Trenton, NJ 08625
TEL: (609) 292-2023 FAX: (609) 984-0578
www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo

Bradley M. Campbell
Commissioner

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Ms. Pamela Garrett
Environmental Team Leader
Division of Environmental Resources
New Jersey Department of Transportation
1035 Parkway Avenue
Post Office Box 600
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0600

received
4/22/04

AB-167 (SUB-NO. 1184X)

Dear Ms. Garrett:

As Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for New Jersey, in accordance with 36 CFR Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties, as published in the *Federal Register* on December 12, 2000 (65 FR 77725-77739), I am providing **Consultation Comments** for the following proposed undertaking:

**US Route 1 (Section +6V) over CONRAIL Sayreville Secondary
(formerly Raritan River Railroad)
Removal of Bridge and Railroad Right-of-Way
North Brunswick Township, Middlesex County.**

This letter is in response to continued consultation regarding the historic significance and integrity of the former Raritan River Railroad right-of-way.

SUMMARY: Previous consultation identified the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District** as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and the **National Musical String Factory** as currently listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places (NJ/NRHP) and within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) of the proposed project. Additional consultation has focused on the evaluation of the historic significance and integrity of the former Raritan River Railroad right-of-way (the currently identified CONRAIL Sayreville Secondary) and concluded that the **Raritan River Railroad Historic District** is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). **This is a new opinion of eligibility.** The project will have **no adverse effect (conditionally)** on historic properties if developed and implemented in accordance with the conditions described in section **800.5 Assessment of Adverse Effects** of this letter.

800.4 Identification of Historic Properties

HPO staff has intensively investigated the historic significance and integrity of the former Raritan River Railroad right-of-way. Previous Historic Preservation Office (HPO) comments for projects involving other segments of this right-of-way have highlighted the state and local historic significance and integrity of the railroad and the eligibility of at least one portion of the railroad line in Milltown.

The evaluation of the former Raritan River Railroad is especially important because, as previous HPO comments noted, the proposed project, the removal of the US Route 1 Bridge over the current CONRAIL Sayreville Secondary (former Raritan River Railroad) has prompted the formal abandonment of this railroad right-of-way for a distance of .46 of a mile from milepost 10.85 east of Route 1 to milepost 11.31 west of Route 1. The HPO has recently received a public filing (STB Number AB 167 (Sub-Number 1184X)) by CONRAIL before the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) that requires both an assessment of historic properties and effects to historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and a consideration of alternative uses for the right-of-way, for example conversion to rail-to-trails. HPO staff has previously provided your staff with information on the railroad abandonment process and federal agency review of abandonment petitions.

The former Raritan River Railroad right-of-way is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district under Criteria A and C. The Raritan River Railroad mainline began in South Amboy, included right-of-way through Sayreville, South River, East Brunswick, Milltown, and North Brunswick, and ended in New Brunswick. Topographic maps note Bergen Hill, Phoenix, Sayreville Junction, and Parlin as points of reference along the right-of-way. The Raritan River Railroad originally included branches or spurs identified as the Kearney Branch, Sayreville Branch, Gillespie Branch, South River Branch, Serviss Branch, and Milltown Spur. The eligible historic district includes the former mainline right-of-way from South Amboy to the east side of Georges Road (New Jersey Route 171) adjacent to the National Musical String Building in New Brunswick and the surviving segments of the Kearney Branch and Gillespie Branch. The section of the former mainline right-of-way between South Amboy and Phoenix (the junction of the Kearney Branch), including the former mainline connection to the Pennsylvania Railroad's Camden to South Amboy Branch (**Camden and Amboy Railroad Historic District**), is eligible for inclusion on the NRHP despite the previous abandonment and removal of rails and ties. Exceptions to this would include the short segment between Pine and Feltus Streets where the right-of-way has been replaced by residential construction and a segment between the former junction with the Kearney Branch and west of the Garden State Parkway (Kennedy Drive in Sayreville) where warehouses and a new road have destroyed the integrity of the right-of-way.

Resources contributing to the historic significance and integrity of the Raritan River Railroad Historic District include, but are not limited to: 166-170 John Street, South Amboy (the former corporate headquarters of the Raritan River Railroad), the surviving components of the Raritan River Railroad - New York and Long Branch Railroad interchange track grade at South Amboy, any surviving foundations or remnants

of the Raritan River Railroad shops in South Amboy, the western abutment of the (removed) railroad bridge over Feltus Street, the bridge over the Pennsylvania Railroad's Camden and Amboy line, the moveable bridge over the South River at South River, the Milltown Freight Station, the deck girder bridge (Milltown Trestle) over Lawrence Brook in Milltown, the Michelin Tire Company (former Meyer Rubber Company) spur and bridge over Lawrence Brook in Milltown (previously evaluated as eligible for listing on the NRHP, June 28, 1991), and railroad undergrade bridges over Main Street (Sayreville), the former Crossman Company clay pit railroad (Sayreville), and Minnisink (or Minniska) Avenue (Sayreville), as well as the India Rubber Company building in Milltown, (listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places), the Michelin Tire Company (former Meyer Rubber Company) buildings in Milltown (previously evaluated as eligible for listing on the NRHP, June 28, 1991), and the NJ/NRHP listed National Musical String Company building in New Brunswick.

The Raritan River Railroad began operations in 1888 and eventually operated a 12.6 mile mainline between South Amboy and New Brunswick. The railroad also operated an extensive network (totaling approximately 11 miles) of branch and industrial spur lines that served the brick, clay, munitions, rubber, and chemical industries located on the south side of the Raritan River. The Raritan River Railroad was the sole railroad outlet for the products of the extensive and historically significant Sayre and Fisher Brick Company manufacturing plants located on the south side of the Raritan River. Sayre and Fisher was itself one of the leading, best known, and most significant of the Raritan River area brick manufacturers (described as "nationally renowned" in a number of historic resource survey reports on file at the HPO).

The Raritan River Railroad was one of the most distinctive of New Jersey's short line railroads, was instrumental in the development of Sayreville, Parlin, South River, and Milltown, and remains the railroad most strongly associated with Middlesex County and the extensive industrial development on the south side of the Raritan River.

800.5 Assessment of Adverse Effects

I reaffirm my previous comments that the project, as currently proposed, will have no effect on the **National Musical String Factory**. The project will have no adverse effect (conditionally) on the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District** and the **Raritan River Railroad Historic District** if NJDOT fulfills the following conditions:

the NJDOT shall minimize the acquisition of property from the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District** and the **Raritan River Railroad Historic District** (NJDOT shall prepare and submit to the HPO information that documents the effort to minimize property acquisition);

within and in proximity to the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District**, the design, location, and construction of new or altered [roadway] access, drainage facilities and infrastructure, landscaping, and signage shall be compatible with the historic significance, character, and setting

of the historic district and shall be responsive to the standards, guidance, and recommended practices found in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Standards)*;

interpretive signs or displays that communicate or illustrate the history of the **Raritan River Railroad** and describe or illustrate the **Raritan River Railroad Historic District** shall be prepared, installed, and maintained by the NJDOT;

the size, format, content, and number of the interpretive signs or displays shall be based upon the quality and quantity of the available historic information regarding the **Raritan River Railroad Historic District** and the NJDOT shall actively consult with the HPO regarding the development and location of the signs or displays (signs or displays on both sides of Route 1 and on the eastern side of Route 171 on or near the former right-of-way should be considered as the appropriate minimum, however, if installing and maintaining signs or displays at these locations is determined during consultation to be infeasible or impracticable, the selection of alternative sign or display locations or alternative approaches to promoting public recognition of the **Raritan River Railroad Historic District** shall be the subject of consultation between the NJDOT and HPO);

the NJDOT shall consult with the HPO and the other previously identified consulting parties regarding the opportunities to enhance and promote the identification and recognition of the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District**;

the New Jersey Department of Transportation shall consult with the HPO and the other previously identified consulting parties regarding the design and construction of the project (and associated project components) within and in proximity to the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District** and afford the HPO an opportunity to review a complete set of project plans and specifications for compatibility with the **New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station College Farm Historic District** and conformity with the *Standards* prior to the conclusion of design and the initiation of the construction bidding process.

If you have any questions regarding the assessment of historic resources or project effects, please contact Charles Scott at (609) 633-2396 or Steve Hardegen at (609) 984-0141.

Sincerely,



Dorothy P. Guzzo
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

C: Elkins Green, NJDOT
Theodore Matthews, NJDOT
Jeanette Mar, Environmental Coordinator, FHWA
Young Kim, Area Engineer, FHWA
Surface Transportation Board, Environmental Analysis Section
Frank Wong, Rutgers University
Township of North Brunswick
CONRAIL

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